



## Business Preparations and Expectations for the 2023 Holiday Season

Over the last several holiday seasons, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have faced a number of challenges. From the lasting impacts of the pandemic such as global supply chain disruptions and labor shortages, to inflation and changes in consumer demands, U.S. businesses have had to adapt to and navigate the changing landscape throughout the year and especially during the holidays.

This year, while inflation and supply chain concerns remain, the 2023 holiday season outlook is a bit more “merry and bright” as SMEs anticipate strong online shopping and e-commerce activity.

To gain insight into SME business expectations for this holiday season as well as their outlook for 2024, DHL conducted a survey of U.S. SMEs. Here are the key findings, compiled from the over 800 responses:

**Proactive holiday planning is a priority.** When asked about their holiday supply chain preparations, more than one-third (37%) shared that they began planning in Q2 2023 or earlier. Further, to ensure a more seamless holiday season, 30% of respondents started planning *even earlier* this year compared to 2022.

**Supply chain is still the top challenge, but inflation is a close second.** When asked about expected business challenges this holiday season, 33% of respondents said supply chain delays were their biggest concern followed closely by inflation (24%). Compared to last year, supply chain and inflation concerns have dropped by 13% and 11% respectively.

**Online sales are expected to surpass 2022 levels.** Compared to the 2022 holidays, a large majority of SMEs are optimistic about their online sales this holiday season. About 70% of respondents believe their business’ online holiday sales will increase (38%) or match last year’s sales (31%).

**The 2023 holiday outlook is global.** To ensure a successful holiday season, businesses are prioritizing global expansion with both international customers and business partners. When asked what their business will prioritize during the holiday season, a quarter (25%) of respondents said expanding globally. Despite global trade challenges, SMEs are optimistic about expansion into new trade markets and are eager to collaborate with international suppliers.

**Business owners are willing to get down and dirty for holiday success.** All the SME respondents said they were willing to go to great lengths for a successful holiday season.

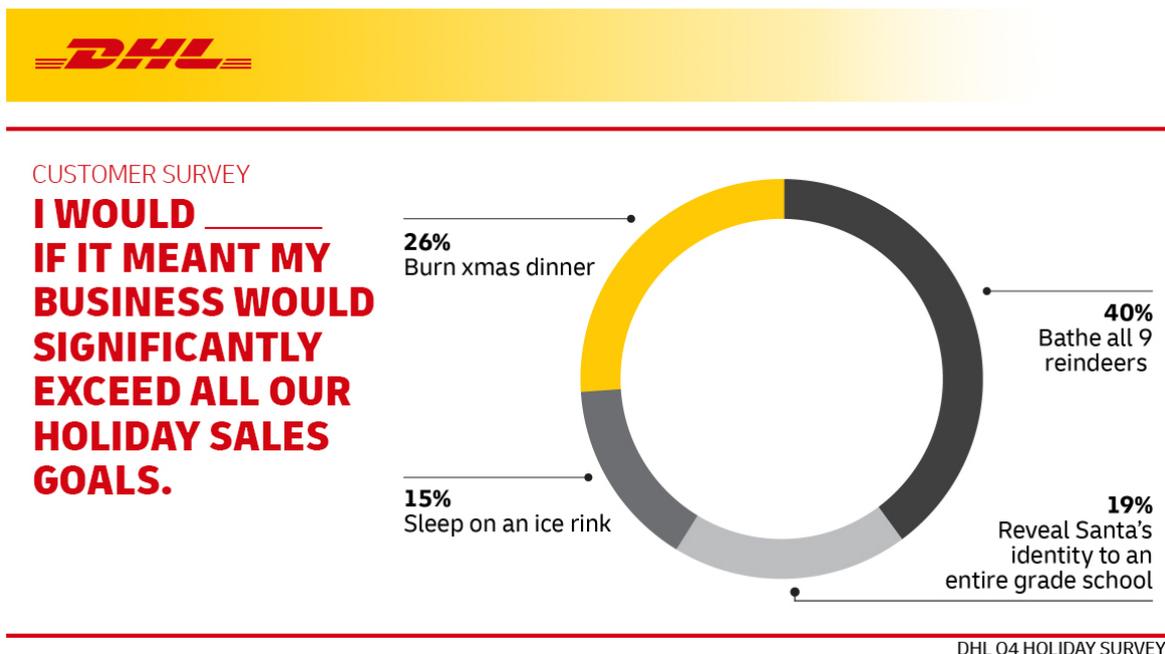


- 40% said they would bathe all nine of Santa’s reindeer if it meant their business would significantly exceed their holiday sales goals
- 26% would burn Christmas dinner
- 19% would reveal Santa’s identity to an entire grade school
- 15% would sleep on an ice rink

Overall, the survey findings suggest that while challenges persist, a majority of SMEs are optimistic about the holiday season and the global trade market going into 2024. Working with an experienced logistics partner, like DHL, during peak season can help companies navigate the challenges and uncover new opportunities. DHL is dedicated to working closely with companies, and to creating custom-shipping solutions so they can begin or continue to expand their businesses beyond the U.S. borders.

See below for the full survey results. Follow @DHLUS on Twitter and Instagram for timely information and updates.

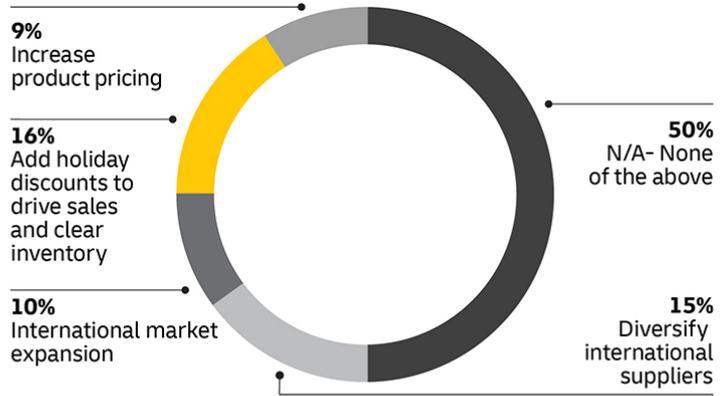
### Complete Survey Results





CUSTOMER SURVEY

### AS A RESULT OF BUSINESS CHALLENGES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

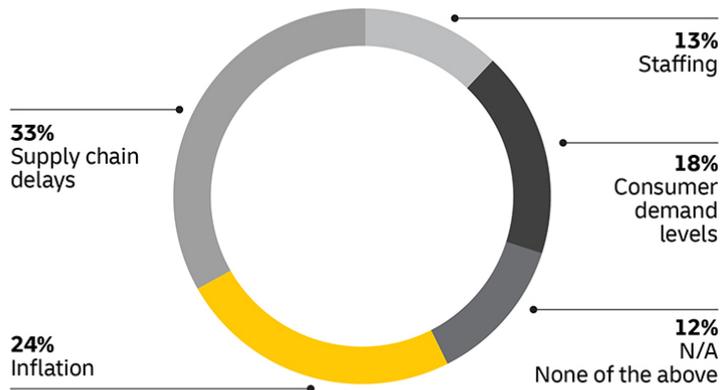


DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY



CUSTOMER SURVEY

### WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WILL BE YOUR BUSINESS' BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

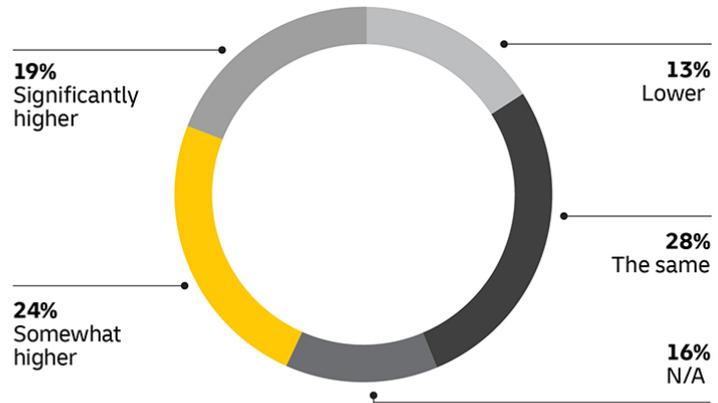


DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY



CUSTOMER SURVEY

**MY BUSINESS' 2022 HOLIDAY ONLINE SALES WERE \_\_\_\_\_ THAN I HAD INITIALLY PROJECTED.**

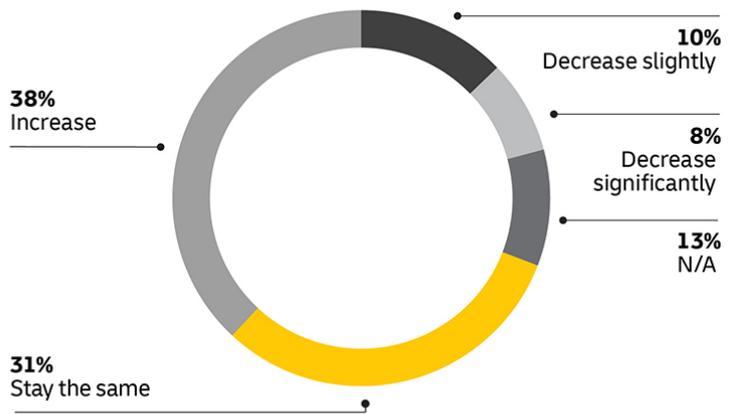


DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY



CUSTOMER SURVEY

**I ANTICIPATE MY BUSINESS' 2023 ONLINE SALES WILL \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARED TO THE 2022 HOLIDAY SEASON.**

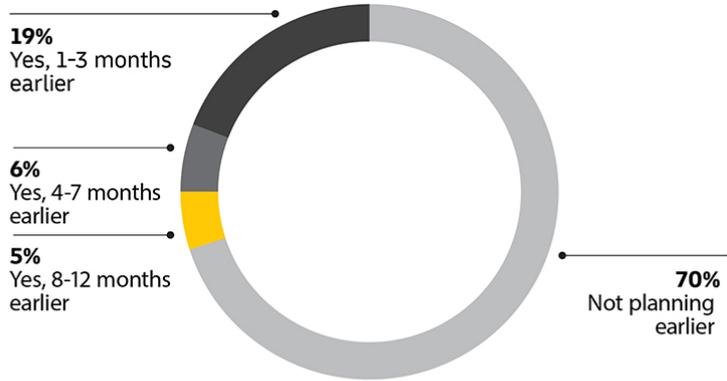


DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY



CUSTOMER SURVEY

**DID YOUR BUSINESS BEGIN PLANNING FOR THE 2023 HOLIDAY SEASON EARLIER THAN A TYPICAL YEAR?**

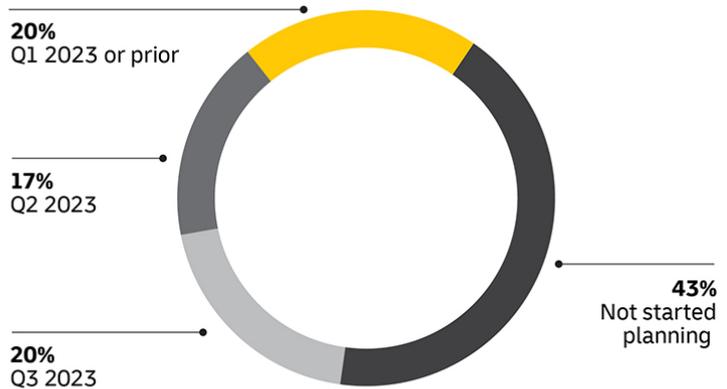


DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY



CUSTOMER SURVEY

**WHEN DID YOUR BUSINESS START PLANNING FOR THE 2023 HOLIDAY SEASON?**



DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY

**IN A RECENT  
SURVEY, 40%  
OF SMALL  
BUSINESSES  
WOULD BATHE ALL  
9 REINDEERS TO  
EXCEED HOLIDAY  
SALES GOALS**



DHL Q4 HOLIDAY SURVEY